

AMENDMENTS

IN THE TITLE:

Please delete the present title in its entirety and replace it with --METHOD FOR INHIBITING THE DEGRADATION OF NATRIURETIC PEPTIDES COMPRISING CONTAINERS MADE OF OR COATED WITH MATERIALS INHIBITING THE ACTIVATION OF SUBSTANCES DEGRADING THEM--.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the following claims:

1. ~~(Three Times Amended)~~ A method for inhibiting the degradation of mammalian natriuretic peptides in a specimen, comprising:

placing the specimen into a container, wherein the face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material,

wherein said material inhibits the activation of a substance, which substance if not activated, cannot degrade the mammalian natriuretic peptides and is selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics.

6. (Twice Amended) A method for measuring mammalian natriuretic peptides in a specimen, comprising the steps of:

employing a container, upon handling the specimen, comprising a material, wherein said material inhibits the activation of a

substance, which substance if not activated, cannot degrade the mammalian natriuretic peptides and is selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics; and

measuring the mammalian natriuretic peptides by standard means.